

Preservation of the Environment according to the Quran and the Analysis of Environmental Issues in Malaysia

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Abstract

Currently, various issues on environment have been discussed, whether the importance, destruction or ways to prevent the destruction of the environment. This paper will explore the issue from the conventional viewpoint as well as from the Islamic perspective. Destruction of the environment in recent times has worsened due to the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources by human beings in order to generate profits. In view of the increasing technological development in Malaysia presently, this matter should not have occurred because the citizens intellectual abilities can be considered advanced. In other words, these people should be able to weigh between positive and negative consequences of voraciously exploiting natural resources. However, the greed that engulfs some of these people has obscured their view from grasping the future consequences of their acts. Based on the Islamic perspective in which the Quran is the ultimate reference, destruction of the environment can actually be prevented if every individual is aware of his or her trustworthiness or responsibility as His caliphate in this universe. Nevertheless, is there any specific verse in the Quran which explains about preservation of the environment? Can lessons from the Quran provide solutions to the environmental crises in Malaysia? This study provides explanations to the questions based on literature surveys and content analyses. By interpreting some selected verses that relate to preservation of the environment, findings from the discussions have identified that the Quranic verses are valuable resources for the sustainability of the environment.

Keywords: preservation; environment; quran; issues; Malaysia

Introduction

Environmental crises generally refer to water pollution, air pollution and soil pollution. This crises that hit the universe at the present time actually ensued since the 18th Century. The existence of the environmental crises was triggered by the emergence of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Specifically, this revolution began in England in which a significant change occurred due to the mass productions of human necessities. The Industrial Revolution was the transition to new manufacturing processes in the period from about 1760 to sometime between 1820 and 1840. This transition included going from hand production methods to machines, new chemical manufacturing and iron production processes, improved efficiency of water power, the increasing use of steam power, the development of machine tools and the rise of the factory system.³ These industrial activities have caused an immense exploitation of natural resources and consequently led to serious environmental crises. Direct awareness of environmental crises emerged with the publication of a manuscript entitled "Silent Spring" in the year 1962. This manuscript was written by Rachel Carson, who was also a

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³Mohd Zuhdi Marsuki & Amir Saifude Ghazali (2002). *Etika Alam Sekitar Daripada Perspektif Islam, Timur & Barat*, h. 2.

scientist. It had successfully captured the attention of people around the universe to the worsening environmental crises at that time.⁴

The environmental crisis has become serious in recent times due to the exploitation and poor management of natural resources. Human exploitation of the environment has caused environmental pollution and the destruction can be notably observed in the middle of 2010 as there was a distinct rise in the global temperature due to the depletion of the earth's ozone layer. The global temperature increased by two degrees and it caused people in many countries, including Malaysia, to experience extreme heat⁵.

As the main source of reference in Islam, the Quran has provided answers to all problems and issues in people's lives. Therefore, Quranic verses should always be used as references for studies, including in dealing with environmental issues. In the Quran there are several verses explaining environmental care. These verses in fact has offered steps that common human are in track to preserve the environment.

Environment is one of the important elements that need to be considered. Natural resources are closely related to the lives of human beings and all living creatures that are created by Allah. The word 'environment' is a term that is often used to describe the condition of everything that exists in this universe. By definition, the term 'environment' refers to all of the things that are close to or surround us⁶. Other than that, it can also be defined as the conditions of the surroundings. Thus, the word 'environment' literally refers to everything that encloses and surrounds people. However, the term 'environment' specifically refers to physical phenomena. These physical phenomena include phenomenal situations that relate to climate and weather⁷. Meanwhile, in the Arabic language, the term 'environment' is known as *al-biah* which means circumference, environment, or surrounding⁸. The term '*al-biah*' according to *Lisan al-Arab* (an Arabic dictionary) is defined as the home of certain group of people which are located at a valley. Other than that, it can also be defined as the tenderness of certain place due to its good surrounding⁹. The term 'environment' can also be defined as the surrounding of human beings. This surrounding is resulted from values of lives which include various resources for livings,

⁴ Rachel Carson (2002). *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

⁵ Ishak Jaino (2010). *Pemanasan Global*. Retrieved from <http://dspace.unimap.edu.my/dspace/bitstream/123456789/7862/1/Pemanasan%20global.pdf>, 17 April 2011.

⁶ Miranda Steel (2004). *New Oxford Dictionary* (translated by Zubaidah Abdul Rahman), h. 266.

⁷ Mohd Zuhdi Marsuki & Amir Saifude Ghazali (2002). *Etika Alam Sekitar Daripada Perspektif Islam, Timur & Barat*, h. 20.

⁸ Mohd Khairi Zainuddin & et.al (2007). *Kamus al-Miftah*, h. 385.

⁹ Ibn Manzur (t.t). *Lisan al-Arab*, h. 39.

such as food, clothes, medicine and accommodation. This in turn involves interactions and relationships among people within the surroundings¹⁰.

Methodology:

The present research had employed the qualitative method in the exploration of a certain concept and its interpretation in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the concept and not to test a certain hypothesis. All data and information in the present study were collected from sources related to the thoughts of the *Mufasssirun*. Analysis was made based on the following methods as suggested by Bakker (Bakker, 2011): (1) Interpretation; and, (2) Inductive and deductive reasoning. The verses of the Quran in the present study interpreted related to the concept of preservation of the environment. The views of the *Mufasssirun* were analysed according to their distinctive features with emphasis on certain aspects. Interpretation of results was made by inductive and deductive methods in order to elucidate the key concept of preservation of the environment which would be fundamental to the preservation of environment from Islamic perspective.

Discussion:

The Environment

In the context of Malaysia, there is enactment called the Environmental Quality Act of Malaysia¹¹. In principle, this Act was enacted to provide the benefit to society of Malaysia. This indirectly coincide with what organised in Islam where Islam emphasizes aspects of well-being and harmony in the life of mankind. The Environmental Quality Act of Malaysia also defines the environment as refer to the physical factors that envelop human beings. This includes land, water, atmosphere, climate, sound, odour, taste, as well as other biological and social factors¹². The environment can also be defined as the ecosphere that contains ecosystems that interact with each other. Meanwhile, an ecosystem consists of biological factors that inter-dependent on each other, between biological factors and physical factors¹³.

Based on the Quranic perspective, the environment is created and owned by Allah SWT. This is mentioned in *Surah* al-Haj verse 64, which means “to Him belong all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. And

¹⁰ Yunus Ibrahim Ahmad Muzid (2009). *Al-Bi'ah Fi al-Islam*, hal. 31.

¹¹ Known as Environmental Quality Act 1974. An Act relating to the prevention, abatement, control of pollution and enhancement of the environment, and for purposes connected therewith. Laws of Malaysia, act 127 (Environmental Quality Act 1974), h. 5.

¹² Norhibah Hasan Zawawi (1999). *Konsep Islam Terhadap Pemuliharaan Alam Sekitar*, h. 4.

¹³ *Ibid*.

verily, Allah He is Rich (Free of all wants), Worthy of all praise”. Even though humans inhabit this universe and they are given the freedom to use the natural resources, it is important for human beings to be aware that everything that is available in this universe is not explicitly theirs, but belonged to the Creator of this universe, i.e. Allah SWT. Human beings cannot misuse use all these natural resources beyond their immediate needs.

Islam also emphasized the importance of preserving the environment. This is indicated in the Quranic verses which urge humans to take good care of the environment. This is particularly so when humans themselves are created from one of the elements of the nature, which is soil. Having said that, the Quranic verses did not mention in specific manner how to preserve the environment. As an example, Allah decree in *Surah* Hud verse 61 which means:

“And to Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih. He said, "O my people, worship Allah ; you have no deity other than Him. He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it, so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive."

Other than that, the Quran also has extensively mentioned destructions and environmental pollutions that are associated with human actions. One of the verses is from *Surah* al-Rum verse 41, which means:

“Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness].”

The verse 41 as mentioned above has proven that the damages on land and sea universe resulted from human actions. This has indirectly signified that, even though human civilization extends far beyond other living creatures that have been created by Allah, environmental destructions in this universe are primarily caused by this group despite possessing high level of civilization.

Topics on environment are always discussed, either through mass media, or printed media. There are also discussions and debates pertaining to various perspectives of environmental topics, including theoretical and practical aspects of preserving the environment. However, as revealed in our review of relevant literature, it can be seen that many of the steps to preserve the environment are not associated with human’s relationship with the Creator. Campaigns that have been conducted are not based upon the foundation of Islam, in which the religion placed importance on three important aspects, which are: human’s relationship with Allah SWT, human’s relationship with each other, and human’s relationship with the environment. As Muslims, these three

fundamental relationships have to be established and safeguarded so that humans will not deviate from the true purpose of their creations.

According to Mawil Izzi Dien who debated on the concept of environment in the Quran, the environment refers to the word '*ma'ayish*' (to reside). This term refers to the surrounding that becomes a living space or place of habitation that is equipped with life necessities such as food, as well as containing animals and plants. All these three elements are interrelated and mutually dependent in life. The author also explained that Allah created the environment, or the universe, for humans to be obliged to Him¹⁴. This confirms the importance of the environment to every living creature created by Allah, particularly human beings. In other words, the environment has indirectly contributed towards the sustainability of the human civilization.

The Purpose of Human Creation

In order to develop an understanding on the sustainability of human civilization from the Islamic perspective, it is important to know the purpose of why human is created. The main purpose of human creation is based on two important roles assigned to humans, which are to be the caliphate of Allah SWT, and to be His servant. These roles were mentioned in Allah's decree in *Surah al-Baqarah* verse 30:

“And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: Wilt thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not.”

In interpreting the verse above, Ibn Kathir elaborated on the issue which was raised by the Angels on the roles of humans as His caliphates since they were aware that it is an immense role for any human to fulfill. This is because, human beings, as the Angels understood, are the creatures who are prone to ruthlessness and destructions. Nevertheless, Allah's answer to the Angels indicates that only He who knows the *hikmah* (wisdom) behind the assigning of the role as His caliphates to humans. Ibn Kathir further explained that, even though humans are prone to ruthlessness and destruction, there are even greater problems that need to be addressed than the ruthlessness and destruction. This is because, among those ignorant people, Allah has placed groups of prophets and messengers, *shiddiqun* (honest people), *syuhada'* (witness to truth of Islam), *mukminin*

¹⁴ Mawil Izzi Dien (200). *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*, h.24.

(true Muslims/ firm believers), and Islamic scholars to be guides for all humans in administering and managing this universe according to His will¹⁵. It is through these groups of people that Allah has granted the privilege for humans to fulfill their roles as His caliphates.

The above Quranic verse has clearly proven that humans are given trust by Allah SWT to be His caliphates in this universe. As His caliphates, among the roles mandated to humans is to preserve the environment, which is essential element in bestowing lives and sustaining the human civilization itself.

Next, in *Surah* al-Dhariyat verse 56:

“I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me.”

Based on the verse above, Ibn Kathir explained that, even though Allah created humans to worship Him, it does not mean that Allah SWT needs humans. Other than that, Ibn Kathir also considered the views of other influential figures in Quranic interpretation as his reference in interpreting this verse. Al-Dhahhak interpreted that any act of worship that is *syirik* (directed to other than Allah) does not bring any benefit to the doer, except for the worship of Allah by those with *iman* (faith in Islam)¹⁶.

Ibn Kathir also mentioned a Hadith whereby Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Messenger of Allah (Peace be Upon Him- PBUH) said, “Allah SWT said: O sons (people) of Adam, busy yourself in worshipping Me, and I will fill your chest with riches and dissipate your poverty. Otherwise, I will fill your chest with distracting affairs and will not do away with your poverty”¹⁷.

Based on the above explanations, it can be concluded that humans were not created in vain; rather they were created with a definite mission in life, that is to fulfill their role as Allah’s caliphates, to become His obedient servant, and thus to manage the universe well.

The Concept of *Al-Mizan*

The universe is one of the amazing creations by Allah. Every living thing in the universe has been given their respective roles to create harmonization among each other. Those given roles include human beings, animals and also plants. All three have mutual needs and they are made interdependent to ensure the universe stability of

¹⁵ Ibn Kathir, al-Hafiz Abi al-Fida’ Isma’il (1998). *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim*. Vol. 1, h. 123-129.

¹⁶ Ibn Kathir, al-Hafiz Abi al-Fida’ Isma’il (1998). *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim*. Vol.7, h. 396.

¹⁷ Ibn Majah, *Sunan Ibn Majah fi al-Zuhdi*, chapter 2, h. 283. See also Ibn Kathir, al-Hafiz Abi al-Fida’ Isma’il (1998). *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim*. Jil.7, h. 396.

the universe. It is through these relationships that Allah has forbidden the misuse and abuse of nature, which if ignored can bring negative effects to all living creatures in this universe.

In Islam, the balance of the universe cannot be separated from the concept of *al-Mizan*. *Al-Mizan* is a concept which is recommended by Islam in order to specifically maintain the ecosystem. Based on this concept, Allah has given the role and responsibility to every creature to implement it. If the entrusted role or responsibility is not fulfilled by them, the system of this universe will alter¹⁸. Everything that is accomplished by human beings needs to take into account of the concept of *al-Mizan*. This emphasizes the importance of humans' actions as His caliphates in this universe.

Other than that, the concept of *al-Mizan* also refers to the universal law of nature that takes into account the relationships between every element in this universe, as well as between living creatures, especially with regards to the role of human beings as His caliphates in this universe. The system which Allah has created would not be compromised if only humans can avoid from voraciously exploiting the natural resources through unrestricted development activities. This is because *al-Mizan* is the system that provide stability through being orderly, in harmony and complementing each other¹⁹.

Subsequent, the balance that should exist in this universe needs to be comprehensive and dynamic, for it should cover every aspect of existence, situation and atmosphere. Allah has created the equilibrium in the universe since the beginning of its creation, even with numerous living creatures living in it. Even though numbers of living creatures and things in this universe is enormous, the universe can still maintain its balance. This is because Allah has created a bond in the form of interdependency between each living creature in order to maintain the universe's equilibrium. This can be observed from distinct functions that are performed by Allah's creations, such as the stars which never collide with each other and always move within their own orbit or path²⁰. Allah also has mentioned about this balance in *Surah al-Mulk* verse 3:

In interpreting this verse, Hamka debated about the position of the stars in the universe which is orderly and organized at a certain distance. In other words, the stars are located within their own sphere without colliding with each other. Other than that, Hamka also provided other examples of Allah's creations, including the sun and the moon. He described that there will be full moon on the fourteenth day of the moon-cycle in which the moon will appear as big as the sun. However, based on the knowledge and research by humans, the

¹⁸Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir (2004). *Rohani Manusia dan Alam Sekitar dari Perspektif Islam*, h.163.

¹⁹Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir (2004), *Rohani Manusia dan Alam Sekitar dari Perspektif Islam*, h. 163.

²⁰ Zakaria Awang Soh (1990). *Kejadian dan Keadaan Alam Semesta*, h. 151.

moon was found to be much smaller than the sun and the earth. This is one of the evidences of Allah's knowledge in administering and balancing everything that He has created. Therefore, there are no anomalies and imbalances which Allah has created for all of His creations²¹.

Based on discussions by Hamka, it can be concluded that Allah's creation is perfect, either in terms of functions or the role of his creations towards each other. The sense of balance in Allah's creation is evident, whether from the creation of the universe itself, or through all of His creations in this universe. Therefore, human beings need to fulfill their role in maintaining and guarding this balance, specifically in the case of the environment, so that there is no destruction and damage to this universe.

Other than that, Ibn Kathir divided his interpretations into several statements to explain the above verse. He interpreted the verse “[And] who created seven heavens in layers” by explaining that the sky is made up of several layers. He also provided two separate views on the verse and concluded that the view which is more acceptable is the one with Isra' Hadith. Next, in the verse “*You never look at the creation of the Merciful Lord something that is not balanced*”, Ibn Kathir opined that all that Allah SWT has created are mutually compatible and complementary to each other. He was also of the view that Allah's creations do not have any conflict on imbalance, deficiency, shame, disgrace, and damage. In the verse “*So turn your vision again, do you see any flaw?*”, Ibn Kathir interpreted the need to look to the sky because there is no defect, deficiency, damage, or imbalance. Ibn Kathir also quoted the views of Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, and other Islamic scholars by stating that the verse “*So turn your vision again, do you see any flaw?*” refers to the meaning of ‘breakdown’. Meanwhile, al-Suddi was of the opinion that “*do you see any flaw?*” is referring to the meaning of ‘damages’²².

This concept of *al-Mizan* is closely related to *takdir* (fate). This is because fate refers to Allah's decree to maintain the balance of this universe. It is important to recognise important role of fate to clarify and utilize the preservation of the environment in order to maintain the balance of the universe. Other than that, fate also plays a crucial role in providing space for human beings to maintain the earth.

Taqdir

Belief in *taqdir* is one of the essences in the Islamic pillars of faith. It is one of the things that every Muslim is obliged to believe and have faith in; either it is good, or bad. Everything that happens, either good or bad, has been determined by Allah SWT. In general, fate also refers to *qadar* (destiny). The word ‘destiny’ literally

²¹ Abdul Malik Abdul Karim (1984). *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Juzu' 29-30, h. 8.

²² Ibn Kathir, al-Hafiz Abi al-Fida' Isma'il (1998). *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*. Vol.8, h. 197.

refers to the measure, decree, and rules²³. The word ‘destiny’, according to *Lisan al-‘Arab*, is a part of Allah’s attributes and powers in determining the fate²⁴. The word ‘*takdir*’ (تقدير) or ‘fate’, linguistically means assessment, evaluation, or estimation²⁵. ‘Fate’ means that Allah is the one who determined and set certain rules in His decree onto something in accordance to its compatibility order²⁶.

Nevertheless, fate is specifically known as *qada’* and *qadar’* (fate and destiny) set by Allah SWT. Imam Abu Hasan al-Asyaari and majority of the scholars of Ahl-Sunnah defined *qada’* as Allah’s will at the beginning of time (former state) which depends on something and conforms to things that are conducted. ‘*Qadar’*, on the other hand, refers to something that is determined by its *qada’* according to the state of nature, time, condition, and also reason²⁷. Other than that, ‘*Qada’* is also about laws or regulations by Allah which determine what should happen to His creations, whereas the conditions that initially occurred at the beginning of time are eternal. Simply put, *qada’* carries the meaning of law, regulation, provision, custom, certainty, and decree.

Even though *qada’* and *qadar* are different, both are closely related and should be included in the discussions about fate. *Qadar* refers to a relationship between *iradah* or willpower to obtain something at a certain time. Therefore, the overall state of a person’s conditions is related to a particular time and a particular reason. This is indeed the description of *qadar*²⁸. The al-Munjid dictionary interprets *qadar* as measuring something with something²⁹, supports the earlier definition.

The universe is also one of the fates that are determined by Allah SWT. It was not created in vain without imparting wisdoms and benefits to those who live in it. It is a fate that Allah SWT has established in his creation of the universe. Allah’s decree of fate is a small piece of the entire greatness of His knowledge. This is because His knowledge covers every single occurrence even before it is created. Allah has ensured a beautiful and balanced measurement of every single thing, either in the forms of shape or characteristic. This was described in the Quran through verse 49 in *surah* al-Qamar.

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ

“Surely We have created everything with Destiny (predestined).”

²³ Abd. Rahim Nur (1981). *Percaya kepada Taqdir: Membawa Kemajuan atau Kemunduran*, h. 25.

²⁴ Ibn Manzur (t.t). *Lisan al-‘Arab*. Vol.5, h.74.

²⁵ Mohd Khairi Zainuddin & et.al (2007), h. 515.

²⁶ M. Fadli A. Bakar (2003). *Qada dan Qadar: Asas Kesedaran, Motivasi dan Kejayaan Hidup Muslim*, h. 2.

²⁷ Abdul Hadi Awang (2008). *Beriman Kepada Qadak dan Qadar*, h. 5.

²⁸ M. Fadli A. Bakar (2003), *Qada dan Qadar: Asas Kesedaran, Motivasi dan Kejayaan Hidup Muslim*, h. 1-2.

²⁹ _____ (2005). al-Munjid Dictionary, h. 780.

These Quranic verses prove that Allah SWT underlines the fact that that He decrees has its own the rate or role of its own in relations to the universe that He created. Similarly, Allah also has given human beings the role to take care of this environment and if they violate what He has established, there will be imbalance which will inevitably lead to destruction and devastation of the universe.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi also discussed about the concept of fate in his writing. He divided fate into three related elements. The first element is pertaining to the universe, which includes the air, space, stars, sun, and many more. All of these things can only function upon Allah's will and Allah SWT has never fail to notice any of them. Everything moves according to the ordinance of Allah SWT³⁰.

Next, the second element of the surroundings pertains to whatever happen to humans themselves. This includes questions such as: why are humans created and what are the purposes of their creations? These questions do not have a precise answer, but they explicitly indicate that each and every occurrence is a decree and fated by Allah SWT. However, this is human beings are required to accept Allah's decree in relation to fate and have faith that whatever Allah has bestowed and created for them carries certain wisdom³¹.

The final element of the surrounding is the freedom for humans to choose, for an example, to eat and drink. Islamic scholars have agreed that this matter is given to humans to decide by themselves, even though Allah has written it in *Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz* (Manuscript of Decrees). It is because it is impossible for Allah to create something, but then He has to perform it Himself³².

Therefore, Allah has given freedom for humans to choose either path: good or bad. It is all upon humans' will power to determine their choices. The same thing goes to the creation of the universe whereby Allah created the earth to the best possible pace and sense of balance. Therefore, it left to humans to maintain it so that there is no imbalance and destruction to this universe.

Quranic Verses that Relate to the Preservation of the Environment

Based on scholars' observations, there is no specific verse that pertains directly to actions related to the preservation of the environment. However, there are 16 Quranic verses which have been identified and could be understood to be in line with the meaning of preserving the environment. These verses were chosen based on the terms or words that forbid human beings from causing damages (فساد), call for actions to make the universe

³⁰*Ibid*, h. 21

³¹*Ibid*, h. 23

³²*Ibid*, h. 27

prosperous (استعمر), and forbid human beings from being arrogant in this universe (مرحاً). All of these words can be used in association with the preservation of the environment. The distribution of the verses in the Quran is described in the following table.

List of Distribution of Verses in the Quran that Relate to Preservation of the Environment

No	Chapter	Verse	Term	Meaning
1	Al-Baqarah	11	لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ	Do not damage the earth.
2	Al-Baqarah	60	وَلَا تَعْتَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ	Do not roam the earth spreading mischief.
3	Al-Baqarah	205	وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ	Allah dislike destruction
4	Al-Maidah	64	وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ	Allah dislike like people who cause destruction.
5	Al-A'raf	56	وَلَا تَفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ	Don't you cause destruction on earth.
6	Al-A'raf	74	وَلَا تَعْتَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ	Do not act reign destructively on earth, causing mischief.
7	Al-A'raf	85	وَلَا تَفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ	Do not cause destruction on earth.
8	Al-A'raf	142	وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ	Do not follow the way of the corrupters.
9	Hud	61	هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا	He has created you from the soil and settled you in it.
10	Hud	85	وَلَا تَعْتَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ	Do not commit abuse on earth, spreading devastation.
11	Al-Isra'	37	وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا	Do not pace the earth to with the intention of showing off .
12	Al-Syu'ara'	183	وَلَا تَعْتَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ	Do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading disruption.
13	Al-Qasas	77	وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ	Do no mischief on the earth.
14	Al-Qasas	77	إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ	Allah does not like people who cause destruction.
15	Al-'Ankabut	36	وَلَا تَعْتَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ	Do not cause destruction on earth.
16	Luqman	18	وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا	Do not pace the earth to with the intention of showing off.

Based on the table above, it can be seen that there are 16 verses in the Quran which have been identified and could be understood to be statements that relate to the preservation of the environment. Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, these verses do not specifically explain about preservation of the environment. They can only be interpreted in an explicit manner. Therefore, to search for the implicit meanings, the manuscript of *Tafsir al-Misbah* and other main references for interpretation will be used to decipher these verses. Other than that, there are many verses that are recurring, as can be seen from the table. Thus, only

several verses will be used as samples to study the Quranic verses that relate to the preservation of the environment.

Quranic Verses on Preservation of the Environment

These identified verses did not specifically explain about preservation of the environment. These verses are more general in nature and they do not specifically mention the environmental elements. However, the verses contain the word ‘الأرض,’ which refers to ‘the earth’. Thus, the word ‘الأرض’ is used as the main key to obtain the verses because the earth has a meaning that is synonymous with the environment. Nevertheless, out of the 16 verses which have been identified earlier, only three verses were chosen as the samples for analysis to discuss about Quranic verses that relate to the preservation of the environment.

The translation manuscript, *Tafsir al-Azhar* elaborated that, every blessings and good things that Allah has bestowed on human beings has to be considered as a reminder for humans to remember Him. The translation manuscript also explained that Islam prohibits humans to complain if they do not get what they want and they should also refrain from being proud and full of themselves if they receive blessings from Allah SWT³³. Meanwhile, according to another translation manuscript, *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, the things that happened to the Israelis, or the Children of Israel, is one way Allah to remove them from humiliation to glory. However, there is a price that they should pay for such freedom. The glory has to be translated into the implementation of responsibilities which Allah has entrusted to them, including not causing destructions to the universe³⁴.

While interpreting verse 60 from *Surah al-Baqarah* as noted in the translation manuscript, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, M. Quraish Shihab touched slightly about the previous verse, i.e. verse 59. In verse 59, Allah has outlined all the good things that were provided to the Children of Israel as they entered the lush city, full of the bounties from the earth. As for verse 60, Allah emphasized on the blessings of water that He has given to the Israeli tribes. The gift of water to the Israeli tribes can be regarded as a general characteristic and it could happen at any place and anytime.

Allah has granted Prophet Musa's wish within a short time without having him to wait, as can be seen from the use of word ف (fa), which means therefore, and not ثم (which means later). This is based on Allah's saying “فقلنا اضربوه ببعضها” which means that, “And We revealed to Moses: Strike the sea with your stick”. The word “stick” was used at the beginning of the sentence to signal that the stick embodied a miracle that Allah had

³³ HAMKA, Abdul Malik Abdul Karim (2007). *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Vol.1, h. 200.

³⁴ Qutb, Sayyid (2003). *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. Vol.1, h. 74.

granted Prophet Musa (A.S.) with. On the other hand, there is also a view that Prophet Musa's prayer was not instantly granted by Allah. Nevertheless, both views still indicated that efforts are still needed for Allah to grant human's prayers. From the story of Prophet Musa (A.S.), he struck the rock with his stick in order to divide the sea.

Both of these terms are not contrary with each other because they referred to the emergence or spurting of the spring and also a few moments after the first spurt. Next, the *twelve springs* refer to the twelve tribes or groups of Children of Israel which consisted of those who descended from Prophet Ya'qub. The existence of the spring for every tribe was the biggest blessing from Allah because each of the groups has their own rights to the spring. This would avoid them from fighting with each other, and thus contributed towards the strengthening and maintaining of the relationships among them. In the last part of this verse, Allah also reminded humans to not cause any destruction on earth. The translation manuscript, *Tafsir al-Misbah* interpreted the verse "*Do not roam in the earth spreading mischief*" by referring to the efforts to maintain the sustainability and prosperity of the universe, to take care of the cleanliness of the surroundings, to prohibit the use of excessive water or being wasteful³⁵.

Meanwhile, according to the interpretation of verse 60 of *Surah al-Baqarah* as seen in the translation manuscript of *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, the prohibition to not spread mischief on earth was decreed after the Children of Israel were given luxuries in terms of delicious food and drink. This prohibition was to remind them not to repay the luxuries they received by demonstrating their *kufir* (disbelief). Other than that, it also acts as a preventive method so that people from other races would not make destruction on earth, and thus cause Allah's wrath. Moreover, the prohibition of Children of Israel from causing destructions on this earth was also intended to get rid of the principles and practices of *syirik* (any act of worship is directed to those other than Allah) which had rooted in their hearts and to wash away their filth and disgrace so that they can worship Allah alone³⁶.

Returning to *Tafsir al-Misbah*, even though this translation manuscript explained in detail about Prophet Musa (a.s.) and his people as well as the miracle of his stick, there are some ways for preserving the environment which can be learnt from the verse that clearly stated Allah's prohibition for humans to cause destruction on earth. M. Quraish Shihab outlined several steps and one of the steps is the importance of preserving the environment. Cleanliness is one of the elements that should be practiced by every individual,

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶ Al-Maraghi, Ahmad Mustafa (t.t). *Tafsir al-Maraghi*. Vol. 1. Juz 1, h. 125-127.

family, and also the society. This is because a clean surrounding will enable us to perform prayers and worship Allah SWT in a peaceful manner.

In the case of Malaysia, there has been an unlimited and uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources everywhere, causing the environment to lose its cleanliness. Adding to this, some sections of society has no qualm in exploiting natural resources to the extent of breaking the law. An example of such destruction includes the illegal intrusion of 40 acres of land in Janda Baik, Pahang even though the forest has been gazetted as a forest reserve. The mastermind for illegal intrusion of this land was a syndicate who hires immigrants to illegally plant vegetables and fruits on the land. This syndicate has been operating for a long time in the encroached part of the forest until they could gain profits from the harvest³⁷. Even though the use of the land could generate profits, illegal intrusion by the syndicate can actually wreck the environment. This is because the encroached forest area which has been intruded by them is under supervision and preservation for heritage purposes, since many other parts of the forest have been encroached for development purposes.

The interpretation in *Tafsir al-Misbah* also mentioned about Prophet Musa (A.S.) and the Children of Israel. Emphasis was given to the importance of water sources that Allah has provided for the Children of Israel through the miracle of Prophet Musa (a.s.). *Tafsir al-Misbah* explained that, even though Prophet Musa's prayer was granted by Allah instantly, it did not mean that prayers to Allah SWT should just be offered for the purpose of begging His help. Prayers need to be followed by efforts. Similarly, in preserving the environment, a person who cherished the universe must not only pray to Allah SWT to protect this universe, s/he also needs to make his or her own efforts in ensuring proper preservation of the universe. Apart from that, pertaining to Allah's reminder for human beings not to make mischief on earth, *Tafsir al-Misbah* explained that, the sustainability and cleanliness of the environment has to be taken care of by humans. As a result of such efforts, it will enable us to curb the environmental pollution. This is because a clean environment can help to prevent human beings from suffering negative consequences, such as illness and so on. One example is the outbreak of dengue disease in Jawi area which needs an immediate attention. Serious action is needed for to solve the problem because the Jawi district has recorded 64 cases in year 2013, as compared to 60 cases the year before. Moreover, dengue is also one of dangerous diseases which occur due to unhygienic environment³⁸. In Malaysia, dengue is one of the highest occurring diseases with a total of 100,000 cases reported and is expected to increase until the end of

³⁷ Lum Chee Hong (2014). *Janda Baik Kena Ceroboh* in Berita Harian. Friday 8 August 2014, h. 10.

³⁸ Zainulfaqar Yaacob (2014). *ADUN Pandang Serius Wabak Denggi* in Buletin Mutiara, edition 16-31 January, h. 27.

2014³⁹. This is the consequence from humans' attitudes, particularly those who are being ungrateful for what Allah has provided them and to add to that, being irresponsible in taking care of the environment. Looking from other perspectives, diseases like this is one way Allah SWT reprimands His servants to fulfill their responsibility as His caliphates on the earth, particularly in maintaining the cleanliness of the environment. Furthermore, it suits the teachings of Islam and Allah SWT also loves cleanliness. This is as mentioned in the Quran in *Surah al-Baqarah* verse 222.

He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.

In conclusion, in the effort to sustain the universe, being grateful is the key to produce people who will appreciate their surroundings, particularly in ensuring the cleanliness of the environment which has offered many benefits to humans, as recommended in *Tafsir al-Misbah*.

With regards to this verse, the translation manuscript of *Tafsir al-Maraghi* interpreted that, Allah SWT has blessed the Thamud people with great civilization and a prosperous community. Allah blessed these people with inspiration and expertise in carpentry, specifically in building houses. Therefore, Allah called upon them to remember His blessings by exhibiting their gratefulness to Him. This sense of being grateful can be translated into their absolute worship of nothing apart from Allah and they should never repay the blessings that He had bestowed to them by disbelieving or refusing Him. This includes the actions of doing things that Allah is not pleased with, especially causing destruction on this earth⁴⁰.

The interpretation in *Tafsir al-Misbah* also includes the story of Prophet Soleh and his people. According to the interpretation, the Thamud people were blessed by Allah SWT with carpentry skills. Such skills have provided them with the ability to build their own houses on the hillsides. Other than that, they were also one of the groups of people who were blessed with a great civilization, after the 'Ad people. This is because they took a lesson from the ruthlessness of the 'Ad people who were punished by Allah SWT. Initially, the Thamud people were a group of people who had faith in Allah. However, soon after, they emulated the 'Ad people who associated others with Allah SWT. Therefore, Allah sent unto them His Prophet Soleh to guide them back to His way and bring to an end to the destructions on earth. Prophet Soleh reminded his people to embrace and appreciate every blessing which Allah had provided them, including their house building skill. However,

³⁹ M Hifzuddin Ikhsan (2014). *Kes Denggi Boleh Catat Angka Tertinggi Negara* in Berita Harian. Friday 8 August 2014, h. 18.

⁴⁰ Al-Maraghi, Ahmad Mustafa (t.t). *Tafsir al-Maraghi*. Vol. 3. Juz 8, h. 199. See also HAMKA, Abdul Malik Abdul Karim (2007). *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Vol.4, h. 2424.

they still refused to worship Him, let alone to be grateful for what He had provided them. They gave excuses to seek for proofs of Allah's greatness before they are willing return to worship Him and Him alone. As a result, Allah showed the phoenix of Prophet Soleh through the appearance of a camel in front of them. This is for Allah to exhibit to the Thamud people His power and ability and at the same time to remind them to return to worship Allah SWT. However, they still refused to obey Allah's command by killing the camel.

Due to this, Allah has sent a severe punishment and resulting in them being destroyed from the world⁴¹. Meanwhile, according to the translation in the *Fi Zilal al-Quran* manuscript, some of these people had faith in Allah SWT. However, many of them rejected the *da'wah* (preaching) of His Prophet Shu'aib (a.s.). Among those people who denied his preaching were the groups of dignitaries and leaders. According to their thinking, accepting his preaching would mean that they would lose their powers and had to return to the power of Allah. Indirectly, this would cause them to lose their privilege as leaders. This way of thinking indicates their arrogant⁴².

A lesson from this story which can be used as guidance in preserving the environment is that, people should appreciate all the blessings that Allah has provided them. As an example, He gives His blessings to us by creating mountains to support the earth so that there is no catastrophe to the environment, such as landslides. These mountains should be well preserved, and not to be blatantly encroached to satisfy human greed. Malaysia is no exception to environmental catastrophe since landslides occur regularly in this country. Although many steps have been taken by the Malaysian government to deal with cases of landslide, this catastrophe is still frequently re-occurring. In an article written by Rosmidzatul Azila, it was argued that among the steps that must be taken to prevent this catastrophe is pertaining to the need for a thorough study of development projects. This is due to the fact that many development projects nowadays stemmed from lack of detailed study. Those projects involving hillside areas would require a systematic research and re-evaluation process so that landslide cases would not recur. The author further explained that development projects that are merely based on profits without considering the safety of other people would be rendered useless and lead to trouble in the future. Other than that, the author also outlined that housing developers are responsible for these development projects and they should be forewarned by the authorities. This is because development projects, by right, should consider the safety aspects as well as benefits to the society. Rosmidzatul Azila also listed some landslides cases and occurrences of slope collapse in Malaysia which were caused by lack of soil stability due to improper planning

⁴¹ M. Quraish Shihab (2009). *Tafsir al-Misbah*. Vol. 4, h. 180-181.

⁴² Qutb, Sayyid (2003). *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. Vol.3, h. 1313.

of development projects. Therefore, development projects at the edge of slope or hillsides should be avoided so that landslide cases will not occur⁴³. Nonetheless, based on the above explanations, it can be clearly seen that the main cause of such catastrophe is the irresponsibility of human beings themselves who are profit-centered and greedy without due consideration of the importance of mountains and hills to the earth. Furthermore, it was explained by Allah in the Quran itself about the function of mountains in keeping the earth stable. This is as explained in verse 31 in *Surah al-Anbiya*'.

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِهِمْ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

“And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with them and We have made therein broad highways (between mountains) for them to pass through: that they may receive guidance.”

The above verse has clearly indicated the importance of mountains in maintaining the stability of this universe. Apart from mountains, the hills also play an important role in supporting the earth. Thus, human beings should use their intellectual abilities which Allah has blessed them with in order to contemplate wisely to preserve the environment, as well as to analyze and foresee the consequences of their actions before doing certain things.

As can be deduced from the interpretation in *Tafsir al-Misbah*, the above verse discussed the story of Prophet Soleh (A.S.) and his people. In the effort to preserve the environment, people should appreciate Allah's blessings. The gratitude can be translated through one's action in managing the environment satisfactorily. A person should use every skill which Allah has blessed him or her with in accordingly. As an example, if the society has skills in environmental preservation, they should use the skills wisely in order to help managing this universe thus benefitting other people. Such efforts can be seen from a programmes organized by the Association for the Protection of Natural Heritage of Malaysia (PEKA) with the collaboration of the Parliamentary Office of Bera. A total of 600 volunteers participated in the forest plantation activity at Chini Reserved Forest, Felda Kumai. In addition, almost 5,000 seedlings of forest trees were planted in order to bring the green back to the 28 acres of land which has been destroyed by illegal settlers. Efforts to sustain the

⁴³Rosmidzatul Azila Mat Yamin (2009). *Teliti Projek Pembangunan Elak Kejadian Tanah Runtuh* in the article of Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia. Retrieved from <http://www.ikim.gov.my/index.php/ms/artikel/8025-teliti-projek-pembangunan-elak-kejadian-tanah-runtuh> on 11 September 2014.

environment were also conducted on a big scale to bring awareness among the public about the importance of preserving earth's heritage. According to the Minister of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry of Malaysia, other than replanting the trees, the ministry also aims to educate the society so that they preserve the environment by reducing activities such as the disposal of plastic materials, use of chemical substances and other actions that lead to the destruction of the environment⁴⁴. Such program has indirectly contributed to produce gratitude in a person so that s/he will not cause damages and instead protect the environment. Other than that, public awareness towards the importance of preserving the environment can also be increased through such programmes.

According to the explanation in *Tafsir al-Misbah* pertaining to the above verse (*Surah al-Isra'* verse 37), Allah forbids people from being arrogant and imperious in their lives. These arrogant and imperious characteristics will not bring any benefit to anybody since it will only invite Allah's wrath. This is due to the fact that human beings, by nature, are created as helpless beings. Even though a person strives hard to achieve something until he or she able to attain certain position envied by many, the person still ensure a high standing in the eyes of Allah if s/he is arrogant and imperious. In understanding verse 37, M. Quraish Shihab quoted the view of Tabathabai who was of the opinion that this verse is only a metaphor. According to Tabathabai, this metaphor is meant for those who show off their power⁴⁵ and in reality, such power is just an illusion because there is a greater power and a higher standard than them even if they stomp their foot on this earth arrogantly and imperiously. Therefore, human beings should admit that they are just His servants with certain weaknesses. Moreover, everything human beings are aiming for, such as kingdom, power, dignity, property, and so on, is not permanent and not worthy in the eyes of Allah SWT. Those mirages are created and handed down by Allah are actually loans to human beings for their use in making the earth prosperous and they are signs of His decree. This can be associated with Allah's saying in *Surah al-Baqarah* verse 36⁴⁶.

Thus, every pleasurable thing in this universe is just temporary and acts as a place for human beings to make good deeds as their reserves and source of reasoning when facing Allah's questions in the hereafter. The same thing goes for preserving the environment; even though the environment is not permanent, human beings cannot simply ignore the importance of maintaining the environment and making it prosperous, as Allah SWT has entrusted them to do, because Allah will evaluate every deed that they do in this universe. Therefore, human

⁴⁴ Luqman Hakim Ab, Rahim & Ahmad Sherman Shamsuri (2014). *Hijaukan Semula Kawasan Gondol* in Kosmo, edition of 19 May 2014, h. 2.

⁴⁶ M. Quraish Shihab (2009). *Tafsir al-Misbah*. Vol. 7, h. 89-90.

beings should avoid being arrogant and imperious so that they will be able to cherish the environment. This is acknowledged from the interpretation of verse 36 in *Surah al-A'RAF* in the translation manuscript *Tafsir al-Maraghi*. According to the interpretation, people should be *tawadu'* (humble) and not boastful because human beings are just weak creatures and they should not regard themselves as strong and versatile. Moreover, this verse is Allah's warning and prohibition to those who are arrogant and full of themselves⁴⁷.

According to further explanation in *Tafsir al-Misbah*, human beings should not be arrogant and proud because they were created by Allah as weak and dishonourable. Humans cannot get whatever they wish for because they have limited abilities and they are dependent on Allah's help. Moreover, everything humans wish to seize in this universe is temporary and it has been given on loan by Allah in order for them to increase their good deeds and gain rewards towards the hereafter. In similar vein, in the efforts to preserve the environment, a person should set his or her intention as an act of worship only to Allah so that every good effort done will get recognition and generous rewards from Him.

However, looking at the situations of environmental issues in Malaysia, one of issues that indicate humans' arrogance and greed pertains to illegal logging. This issue has been one of the biggest problems faced by the Malaysian government in the efforts to maintain the harmony and prosperity of the environment in this country. The illegal loggers demonstrate their arrogance by continuing their activities even though they are faced with punishments of law in the forms of prison and penalty. These punishments do not even affect their intention and action to continue exploiting these natural resources through illegal logging activities.

As a result, the government has become more aggressive in enforcing a stricter law on illegal logging. There are several amendments of the law whereby there will be a fine or penalty of RM 1 million and a mandatory jail sentence of five years to those illegal loggers who are found guilty. This law amendment is in line with the government's effort towards achieving a block of four million acres of land under The National Tiger Action Plan starting from the year 2008 until year 2020. Besides, the action also aims to double the population of Malayan tiger from a total of what is believed to be now 500 tigers and is expected to increase up to 1,000 tigers in the year 2020⁴⁸. Moreover, on December 2014, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (SPRM) proposed that the illegal loggers should be punished with the caning punishment so that these illegal

⁴⁷ Al-Maraghi, Ahmad Mustafa (t.t). *Tafsir al-Maraghi*. Vol. 5. Juz 15, h. 46-47.

⁴⁸Bernama (2011).Tindakan Lebih Tegas Kepada Pembalakan Haram dalam Borneo Post Online. Retrieved from <http://www.theborneopost.com/2011/03/22/tindakan-lebih-tegas-ke-atas-pembalakan-haram/> on 4 November 2014.

logging activities can be combated. This action is important to ensure that the imposed punishment commensurate with the offense committed. Besides that, it added a preventive or deterrent element to give a lesson to those who are found guilty and to the community at large⁴⁹. The issue of illegal logging has clearly shown the arrogant characteristics of those involved who under no circumstances think of the consequences of their actions on other people and to other living creatures created by Allah SWT, particularly inhabitants in the forest.

Conclusion

The environment is one of Allah's blessings to human beings and He entrusted them with a role to preserve the environment so that the balance of this universe can be maintained. Furthermore, the Quran also emphasizes the function and purpose of why humans are created on this earth. As the ultimate reference to humans, the Quran has outlined several steps through its verses to guide human beings in their efforts towards preserving the environment and preventing themselves from causing destruction and ruination on the earth. Nevertheless, all efforts to preserve and sustain the environment start from the *Mahmudah* (praised) characteristics in humans, such as being grateful, humble, and never lose themselves in all the luxuries that are given by Allah. Such characteristics will make them realize that everything that Allah has provided to them is a loan from Him and it is a responsibility that they need to fulfill. Therefore, as a Muslim-majority country in which the Quran is the primary guidance for the Muslims, Malaysia should be able to handle environmental issues and reduce the environmental destruction more effectively.

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⁴⁹ Sheila Rani Chandrasekaran (2014). *Sebat Pembalok Haram-SPRM dalam Utusan Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.utusan.com.my/berita/nasional/sebat-pembalok-haram-8211-sprm-1.18959> on 4 September 2014.

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